

### Creating Religious Spaces in Cape Town, Barcelona and Montreal: Perspectives From Cultural Theory on the Re-Figuration of Spaces and Cross-Cultural Comparison

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## Creating Religious Spaces in Cape Town, Barcelona and Montreal: Perspectives From Cultural Theory on the Re-Figuration of Spaces and Cross-Cultural Comparison

*Marian Burchardt*

### Key words:

figurational  
sociology; cross-  
cultural  
comparison;  
sociology of  
space; spatial  
analysis; re-  
figuration of  
spaces; urban  
space; religion;  
place-keeping;  
Cape Town;  
Montreal;  
Barcelona

**Abstract:** Engaging with recent social science debates on urbanism, space, and religion, in this article I explore how religious change and the re-figuration of spaces are mutually shaped in cities located on three different continents: Cape Town, Barcelona, and Montreal. I start from the premise that social actors' spatial strategies and existing spatial regimes with regard to urban religion are mediated by the ways in which state and non-state actors draw on and mobilize publicly circulating notions of religious diversity and secularity. My argument is that there are, at the current conjuncture of global religious change, three main processes affecting the re-figuration of spaces: 1. the eventization, 2. the infrastructuration, and 3. the heritagization of religion. While they carry global significance, these processes play out differently in the three cities I analyzed. By identifying these shared developments, I challenge the notion that links between urbanism and religion in the Global South and the Global North are different beyond comparison. Instead, I argue that comparative methodologies in studies on urban religion are indispensable in order to reveal both global structural forces and cultural differences. The article is based on my ethnographic fieldwork carried out in each of the three cities.

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## 1. Global Religious Change and the Re-Figuration of Spaces

Despite the impressive proliferation of studies on space that have emerged in the wake of the "spatial turn" in a variety of disciplines—including geography, anthropology, and sociology—cross-cultural comparisons of spatial orders and spatial practices remain a rarity. Part of the reason for this is that most scholars working on space subscribe to ideographic epistemologies and inductive, bottom-up methodologies and are therefore hesitant to jump to macro-sociological levels of analysis. Historical macro-sociological studies, by contrast, tend to view diverse spatial arrangements as variable, site-specific manifestations of one overarching spatial order or set of power relations such as the capitalist world-system or post-Fordism, leaving little space for comparative perspectives (BRENNER, 2004). [1]

By contrast, in this article I seek to probe the *analytical potential of qualitative comparative methodologies in the study of spatial arrangements and the re-figuration of spaces* that assemble a multiplicity of ethnographic and other types of data in order to explore different scenarios of how relationships between social change and transformations of urban spatial arrangements vary across cultures. In so doing, I focus on *religious change* as one subset of broader processes in social and cultural change and examine how religious change and the re-figuration of spaces are mutually shaped in cities located on three different continents: Cape Town (South Africa), Barcelona (Spain), and Montreal (Canada). In this article, I am therefore chiefly interested in urban space and, more specifically, the ways in which *urban spaces* are products of religious imaginaries, practices, and power relations and simultaneously enable particular geographies and localizations of religion. [2]

While differing in terms of historical development and socio-economic status in their national and regional environment, these three cities share several important features: all of them are multicultural cities that have developed social mechanisms—at the level of both everyday life encounters and urban policy—that structure interreligious relationships and their spatializations. These contemporary forms of multi-religious conviviality, however, harken back to histories in which these cities became gateways and hubs of commerce, trade and human mobilities, and in which urban religious geographies began to be mapped onto unequal socio-economic power relations and urban social hierarchies. While these processes already began in Barcelona during the seventeenth century, they took off during the nineteenth century in Cape Town and Montreal. [3]

In each of these cities, populations have experienced, albeit at different historical moments, dramatic transformations of urban religious landscapes and demographics, which raises the question of how these processes of religious and

cultural change contribute to and are shaped by the re-figuration of spaces. These processes can only be fully explored by means of a comparative analysis. Thus, there are local factors that shape cities in spite of the far-reaching influence of globalization and that contribute to the emergence of what LÖW (2013, p.898) called the "intrinsic logics of cities." [4]

In this article, I will argue that within the current conjuncture of *global religious change*, three main processes affect the *re-figuration of spaces*: the eventization, the infrastructuration, and the heritagization of religion. While they all carry global significance, these processes play out differently in the three cities I analyzed. The differences have to do with the diverging histories of modernity, secularization, and religious vitality, but also with the way in which urban regimes of spatial governance influence religion. I begin with a discussion of recent scholarship on religion and urban space highlighting the need for cross-culturally comparative methodologies (Section 2). After that, I describe my methodology in greater detail specifying sampling and data interpretation strategies (Section 3). In Sections 4–6, I provide a detailed comparative account of how religious spaces emerge at the interface of urban regimes and religious actors' spatial strategies. I conclude the article by specifying the lessons that can be learned from cross-cultural comparisons of cities (Section 7). [5]

## 2. Religion and Urban Space

Religious traditions have always enjoyed close relationships to spaces and places. Religious imaginations and practices are, as religious studies scholar TWEED (2006, p.5) famously suggested, fundamentally about "crossing and dwelling," with *dwelling* involving practices of mapping, building, and inhabiting. Crossing refers to the links between the worlds of humans and gods while mapping involves demarcating sacred and profane space. From a phenomenological perspective, it is through practices of habitation that humans wrest space from the forests of wilderness and that human life becomes possible in terms of productions of locality (APPADURAI, 1996). In this vein, since antiquity, religious maps have involved the demarcation of territories as belonging to particular deities and the instantiation and enactment of divisions between profane and sacred space (ELIADE, 1959). In subsequent historical phases, such spatial divisions have been reworked in terms of immanence versus transcendence as well as through the religious-secular dyad, which became the hallmark of religious understandings in the modern age (CASANOVA, 2009) and was marked by its own spatializations. [6]

Throughout and across these different historical phases, however, religious practices have themselves been, in a strong sense, *spatial practices*. Prayers are often spatially directed toward sacred centers and are practices in which the body of the worshipper is the spatial vector that bundles and orients the flows of spiritual energy unleashed and actualized by the prayer. Pilgrimages are movements across holy lands that re-enact foundational religious rituals, linking believers to particular religious lineages (HERVIEU-LÉGER, 1999). All of these practices produce and reproduce religious spaces (EADE & SALLNOW, 1991). [7]

Through such practices, religious actors have engendered particular types of *spatial regimes*. In Roman Catholicism, the parish—constituted as a bundle of institutional and material elements, such as chapels, schools and hospitals—became the fundamental spatial unit out of which Catholic space was built, assembling believers who resided in a defined territory or neighborhood (HERVIEU-LÉGER, 2002). In Buddhism, by contrast, through their emphasis on temple sacrifice and temple-centered forms of piety, religious actors developed spatial regimes that were more polycentric and dispersed. [8]

More recent research on religion and space has been characterized by a defining turn toward urban religion and the ways in which religious practices and forms of belonging and urban space intertwine. Animated by the global resurgence of religion and the forceful re-appearance of religious actors, subjectivities, and discourses in the public domain, sociologists and anthropologists have explored the conditions under which religious practices and identities acquire a particular spatial configuration in cities across the globe as well as the consequences of those spatial configurations for issues of power and cultural hierarchies (ASTOR, 2016; GARBIN, 2013; HÜTTERMANN, 2006; KNIBBE, 2009; KRAUSE, 2014). In general, scholars are inclined to adopt a *dual conceptualization* involving subjectivities and agency (of believers and other actors) in terms of *spatial strategies* on the one hand, and the constraints imposed on these strategies in terms of power-laden *spatial regimes* on the other. [9]

As I will argue below, while necessary and useful, this dichotomous construction raises questions as to how agency and structure, or spatial strategies and spatial regimes, are actually linked and mediated. I suggest that *collective orientations toward political discourses and frameworks regarding the place of religion in society*, in particular those concerning secularity and religious diversity, mediate between the spatial strategies of religious actors and the broader spatial regimes of cities. In different ways, both religious groups and officials working for urban authorities (elected politicians, bureaucrats, planners, and legal experts) engage with such frameworks, translating and reworking them through everyday practices of space-making. Cross-cultural comparisons, I argue, provide unique insights into how exactly such mediations work and the spatial configurations they yield. [10]

A great deal of researchers in the field of urban religious spaces focus on religious communities that are embedded in processes of globalization and transnationalization—via global proselytism, mobility, and migration, or a strong presence in the virtual spaces of the internet, such as Evangelical Christianity, Salafi Islam, global Hinduism, and other diaspora religions—and have championed notions of religious place-making. VÁSQUEZ and KNOTT (2014), for instance, followed TWEED (2006) in conceptualizing the "place-making"-*spatial strategies of migrant religious groups* in global cities as something that encompasses both dwelling—which includes mapping, building, and inhabiting—and crossing, "in so far as it is inextricably connected with mobility" (VASQUEZ & KNOTT, 2014, p.327). Similarly, GARBIN (2012, p.401) defined place-making as "the appropriation and experience of place through various religious activities." [11]

However, the one-sided focus on diaspora or migrant religious communities has tended to exclude other religious traditions, in particular those that are deeply embedded because of their long historical presence and routinized relationships with state authorities, and those groups that may not aim for or engender permanent spatial presences. Therefore, I argue that it is important and useful to go beyond notions of "place-making" by adding two other distinct spatial strategies: place-keeping and place-seeking (BECCI, BURCHARDT & GIORDA, 2017).

- By *place-keeping*, I mean religious investments meant to preserve urban presences across changing political and cultural conditions and to reproduce symbolic power. A prominent example is the construction of the famous basilica La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, which sought to reinstate Catholic power in an age of increasing anticlerical working-class mobilizations.
- *Place-seeking*, by contrast, refers to spatial strategies that produce ephemeral and evanescent presences as a result of spiritual notions in favor of embodiment and mobility over location. Examples are spiritual flash mobs and pilgrimages. [12]

At the same time, scholars recognize that religious spatial strategies take place in a field of unequal power relations and cultural hierarchies, which are structured, legally sanctioned, and officially legitimated by state authorities. Through practices of *zoning, planning, and granting permissions*, actors working for urban authorities assign particular uses to urban spaces, thereby co-creating the religious geographies of contemporary cities. This concerns both permanent religious markings of urban space (through granting permission to build places of worship) and the facilitation of impermanent presences (as in the case of religious processions, parades, and festivals, or regulations regarding religious symbols such as crosses or crucifixes as well as religious clothing such as the Islamic full-face veil). [13]

In particular, KNIBBE (2009), in her study of Nigerian Christians in the Netherlands, showed how religious practitioners elaborate their spatial orientations through notions, imaginations, and practices of *mapping*. As KNIBBE astutely argued, mapping not only entails the mental construction and visual representation of spatial divisions (including intersections, lines, and boundaries) but also how they are linked to religious divisions. She (p.147) suggested:

"In the case of institutional actors, 'producing locality' is not the unintentional by-product of everyday routines and spatial practices but the outcome of a process that I want to characterize as mapping, creating persuasive images of the space in which people find themselves, their location and role in it. These maps are not 'just' rhetorical devices, but can mobilize people's imaginations, resources and time to create 'facts on the ground'. These facts on the ground are what I have referred to above as geographies: tangible and visible locations connected to other locations, nested within, in this case, religious hierarchies and networks." [14]

Inspired by this conceptualization, I seek in the subsequent analysis to demonstrate how practices of mapping inform the spatial strategies of both religious actors and urban governments and administrations. They are thus a central device in constructing spaces of urban religion as objective social realities. [15]

### 3. Methodology

The following analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork, interview-based qualitative research, and the analysis of policy documents. My ethnographic fieldwork has mainly focused on the spatial implications of religious life and religious practices and on interactions between religious communities and urban authorities. In Cape Town, fieldwork took place during a total of 17 months starting in 2006, whereas my fieldwork in Montreal and Barcelona involved stays totaling 8 months in each city and took place within the framework of a broader research project on regulations of religious diversity in Quebec and Catalonia beginning in 2012 (BURCHARDT, 2017, 2020). In this context, I carried out qualitative, open-ended interviews with human-rights activists, legal experts, politicians, bureaucrats working in national or urban administrations, secularists, feminist activists, leaders and members of religious communities, and organizers of interfaith activities. This sampling was based on the insight that these actors have a defining influence on spatial strategies and have intimate knowledge of spatial regimes. While doing so, I used the strategy of theoretical sampling (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1967) in order to achieve theoretical saturation with regard to the spatial strategies conceptualized and used by these actors. In each instance, I drew on the method of comparing and contrasting the most similar and distinct cases of spatial strategies. This was made possible by my returning to all three field sites and subsequent note taking and theorization over an extended period of time. Interviews took place in offices and private homes, lasted between one and two hours, and were subsequently transcribed in full. Ethnographic data emerged from my participation in the meetings of religious groups, where I observed decision-making processes, religious rituals and their interactions with other groups of residents. At the level of data interpretation, I followed the strategy of confronting latent and manifest meanings of interview data (WOHLRAB-SAHR & PRZYBORSKI, 2008). Within this perspective, access to social reality is not granted by reconstructing the subjective meanings people attach to their practices and statements. Rather, it emerges by comparing *what is said* with *what is done*, by analyzing how subjective meanings are linked to objectified expressive forms and objective problems of practice. Thus, methodologically my central question is *how typical actualized spatial strategies as the overriding problem in practice relate to structural spatial situations*. [16]

In addition, I collected documents such as legal texts, policy papers, and press articles, and also participated as an observer in key events and processes related to the making of religious space, such as public demonstrations, marches and rallies, the meetings of secularist organizations, public religious processions and devotions, and the construction of new places of worship. In general, my analysis was anchored in a triangulation of the data. In addition, for the purposes of this

article, I opted for a narrative style of analysis. In other words, I reread and interpreted interviews and ethnographic field notes in light of the question of what they had to say about spatial strategies, spatial regimes, and public space. I then scrutinized how actors' spatial strategies reproduced or reworked existing spatial hierarchies, how they actually interpreted and conceptualized them, and how space was relevant for their religious or political projects. Interviews were conducted in the dominant languages in each city (Catalan and Spanish in Barcelona, French and English in Montreal, Xhosa and English in Cape Town). For particularly culturally salient and polyvalent terms, I conducted semantic analyses with interviewees in order to derive adequate translations into English. Significantly, as ROTH (2013) argued, my research involves two levels of translation—that implied in grounded theory-driven transcription and coding as well as the translation of verbal data into English, the language of this article. In order to clarify which instances of translation come into play, I indicated whenever the original quotes were not in English. [17]

The broader methodological ambition of the article is to advance qualitative case comparisons in urban sociology involving cases from both the Global North and the Global South. Doing so required the empirically informed conceptualization of the key terms spatial strategy and spatial regime, which in turn allowed me to construct the shared structural conditions on the basis of which such comparisons become meaningful. Following these assumptions, I explored how similarly positioned social actors perceived, interpreted, and acted upon social and spatial contexts that had formal similarities and internal variation. On the basis of these steps of analysis, I was able to validate the basic spatial strategies I describe in this article. [18]

## **4. Religion and Urban Space in Cape Town**

### **4.1 National context (South Africa): Political transition and religious vitality**

Since the legal end of the apartheid regime and the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa's religious field has been dramatically transformed. These changes comprise at least two main elements, one political and one demographic:

1. As a result of the political opening up of the country and political developments in other African countries, South Africa has become a major destination for *new waves of migrants*, especially from neighboring countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique but also from more distant nations like the Congo, Nigeria, and Somalia. This has led to changing configurations of religious diversity as migrants bring with them culturally and organizationally different forms of religion, particularly denominations of Christianity and Islam, but also all kinds of African religions (LANDAU, 2009).
2. There have been *dramatic shifts in religious demographics* as older Christian churches of missionary origin such as the Anglican, Methodist, and Dutch



Reformed Churches have lost adherents, while charismatic and Pentecostal churches have grown considerably (BURCHARDT, 2016). [19]

In fact, one could argue that the growth of *Pentecostalism* is the single most important process of religious change over the last 25 years as it has prompted and shaped many other changes. Pentecostalism has animated new kinds of public religion and the spread of Evangelical rhetoric in South African political discourses (WEST, 2009); it has inspired the most visible and sustained forms of civil-society-driven resistance against progressive policy-making and legal changes in the field of gender relations and sexuality, all of which adhere to liberal values (BURCHARDT, 2013); and it has contributed to the circulation of new ideologies of individualism focused on economic success, wealth, and consumerism (VAN WYK, 2014). Finally, the rise of Pentecostalism has accompanied and thrived on more pronounced antagonisms between itself and African traditional rituals (around ancestor worship), traditional healing, and spiritual protection against witchcraft, which are the core domain and competence of traditional healers. [20]

In general, the South African state can be described as moderately secular in that there are powerful legal protections for religious freedom and non-discrimination. Since 1994, *state neutrality toward religion* has become a central legal doctrine, which forms the foundation for judicial discourses and decision-making but also dovetails with people's perceptions of the state in this realm. At the same time, notions of secularity are not very widespread in society, playing a minor role in political discourses and only resonating culturally within the milieus of cultural and political elites, as well as in the social worlds of progressive social movements, feminists, and other left-wing political activists. The most readily available and widely circulating notion in public discourse concerning religion is the idea that religious diversity works smoothly and does not present a major challenge, neither to state authorities who regulate and manage cultural and religious diversity nor to communities of citizens who interact with religious others as residents of South Africa's inner cities and townships do on a regular basis in everyday life. [21]

The main reason behind this apparent interreligious harmony is that *religious belonging cuts across the dominant lines of social differentiation, stratification, and social hierarchies formed around race, class, and ethnicity*. In this context, it is all the more cogent and plausible for the state and policy-makers to base public discourses about social harmony and the "rainbow nation" on frames of religious diversity, as this dimension of difference is perceived as politically unproblematic. [22]

## 4.2 Urban context (Cape Town)

While there have been major political and legal transformations with regard to religion at the national level, urban spaces are still deeply shaped by the legacies of more than three centuries of colonialism, apartheid, and racism. Spatial segregation was an essential component of colonial urban planning and of the racist policies of the apartheid project, which denied large segments of the black population access to the city. Apartheid policies led to the rigid segregation of different racial groups within the city, as well as the tight control of people's movements and mobility in Cape Town's urban space. These policies also implied particular spatializations of religious life. Ethnic groups such as Indians who were mostly Hindus and Muslims were classified as "colored" and concentrated in spatial enclaves. Christian communities were—to some extent—divided with white congregations gathering in the white city and black congregations meeting in the black townships. In addition, the spatial separation of township life allowed for the emergence of particular forms of African religious life that were rarely present in the city proper. Until the legal end of the apartheid state in 1994, Cape Town was thus a segregated city *par excellence* and, in many respects, continues to be so. [23]

Significantly, spatial segregation not only meant the spatialization of ethnic, racial, and religious differences, but also implied the spatialization of economic inequalities and patterns of poverty. While many parts of the city display tremendous material wealth, life in the townships—which are separated from the city proper by several belts of urban wasteland in some areas but linked to it in very fluid ways in other areas—has often been marked by extreme hardship and a lack of basic infrastructure, severely impeding any possibility improving the quality of life. The most important segregation policy to impact Cape Town was the infamous "Group Areas Act," introduced in 1951. With the highly symbolic destruction of the hitherto ethnically mixed District Six, located in the city center, residential segregation gradually neared completion in 1968. With the exception of Lower Wynberg, all of the central business districts and residential zones located along the slopes of Table Mountain were restricted to white ownership. Property-owning, non-white communities residing in these areas were forcibly removed and resettled in desolate, low-value townships in the open wastelands of the Cape Flats, while black residents in both the city and the townships were subjected to even more severe restrictions. As a result of economic and political factors, Cape Town is South Africa's most segregated city today, and economic inequalities have even increased since the political transition 25 years ago (BESTEMAN, 2008). Because of this apparent lack of economic dynamism, Cape Town has never attracted much scholarly attention compared to Johannesburg (MURRAY, 2008). [24]

Decades after the arrival of democracy, economic strains continue to characterize life for most township dwellers in Cape Town, while new fault lines and inequalities have emerged, particularly due to the massive influx of migrants from the Eastern Cape province and the former homeland of Transkei. This influx began as soon as the apartheid Pass Laws were partially abandoned in 1986,

allowing impoverished Xhosas to move to Cape Town's township in search of a better life. This rural-to-urban migration accelerated tremendously throughout the 1990s and has led to uncontrolled urban sprawl and the establishment of a series of new informal settlements. These are essentially unplanned settlements with no, or only informal, access to urban infrastructure such as water, electricity, and roads, and made up of shacks built with corrugated iron as well as pieces of wood and plastic—materials regarded as useless rubbish by others. In Khayelitsha, home to more than 390,000 residents and the site of most of my field research, roughly 53 percent of residents live in informal settlements. Unemployment is officially at 38 percent, though it reaches a staggering 70 percent in some neighborhoods, and 19 percent of all households are registered as having no income at all. Given the close connections between poverty and HIV/AIDS, it is not surprising that Khayelitsha was and still is one of the districts with the highest HIV infection rates in the Western Cape province, and a place where material resources to combat the disease have been especially scarce (BURCHARDT, 2015). Informal settlements strongly contrast with formalized township settlements such as Langa, whose establishment dates back to the 1970s, as well as the state-financed neighborhoods constructed in the context of the "Reconstruction and Development Plan" (known as "RDP houses"). [25]

Significantly, Cape Town's informal settlements have, over the last decade, become highly politicized and the object of both top-down, party-driven and grassroots-driven mobilizations around urban infrastructure. Most research on urban dynamics in townships and informal settlements has focused on this kind of political mobilization (ROBINS, 2014; SKUSE & COUSINS, 2007) and has largely ignored the cultural and religious dynamics that have emerged in the wake of post-apartheid social transformations in an urban context. [26]

#### 4.3 Spatial strategies of space-making

Overall, spatial strategies of religious communities in Cape Town are shaped by 1. the positive attitude towards religion, and 2. religious competition. Contrary to Montreal and Barcelona, *religion is generally viewed extremely positively* by the majority of the city's population, in particular in the townships, where religion is often seen as a possible remedy against all sorts of social, cultural, and economic ills and evils. These can be both spiritual and secular. In the context of alarmingly high levels of crime, especially drug-related crime, domestic violence, and violence against women—all of which are structurally linked to the presence of criminal youth gangs—religion is seen as a preventive and therapeutic social space. Many ordinary township residents encourage their children's participation in religious life, as this is viewed as keeping them busy and "off the street." Simultaneously, conversion to charismatic Christianity is one of the few roads open to young men who wish to leave gang life and its destructive models of aggressive masculinity (REIHLING, 2020). [27]

This configuration of factors means that *competition between religious groups* is not generally viewed in political terms as it is in Barcelona and Montreal, where, depending on people's political commitments, migrant religiosities—in particular

those of Muslims—are seen either as politically and culturally suppressed and dominated, or as politically and culturally alien, and hence undesirable and in need of being tamed. Rather, the understanding of religious competition—shared by the residents of Cape Town's townships across their lines of religious difference—is supported by the notion of struggle as the chief means of achieving salvation (RIESEBRODT, 2010). [28]

Significantly, this struggle takes place between religious traditions as well as within them. This is especially true for *Pentecostal Christianity*. In this strand of Christianity, positions of religious authority are not acquired through formal education and meritocratically organized advancement (as in most European churches). Instead, the theological key term "spiritual gifts" implies that particular individuals can receive a calling from God and acquire the faculties to preach, heal, and lead others to salvation, and legitimate their religious authority in these terms. Based on this theological construction, in addition to the expectation that becoming a pastor means being able to make a living for oneself and one's family through the collection of tithes, Cape Town's Pentecostalism has not only been transformed into an extremely dynamic field of religious competition. It has also become a labor market of sorts in which wealth, prestige, and ascribed religious virtuousness are inextricably entangled and together produce a visible religious hierarchy. This religious hierarchy is recognized by populations of residents, who also co-produce it through their religious choices by channeling material resources—through tithes and an impressive variety of other practices of "sacrifice" and "offering"—to some pastors and churches and not others. [29]

This competition within the Christian community leads to a constant proliferation of new Pentecostal congregations, which either build new church buildings or rent spaces. In fact, Cape Town's urban landscape (including the inner city, the more affluent suburbs, townships, and informal settlements) is literally dotted with Pentecostal places of worship, producing a closely linked network of material sites, which for most residents lie within a few minutes' walking distance.



Figure 1: Church building of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in the township of Khayelitsha, Cape Town (my picture, taken in 2014) [30]

In the *extremely economically underprivileged, informal settlements*, churches mostly represent examples of makeshift urbanism in which pastors and congregations work together to collect the necessary building materials—corrugated iron, window frames, pieces of wood or chipboard, plastic canvasses, and poles—wherever they find them, and assemble those elements into improvised structures. Because the residents (who are usually migrants from the impoverished Eastern Cape province) employ these same materials to build their first houses, places of worship generally *resemble homes* and from the outside it is often difficult to tell the difference.



Figure 2: Small Pentecostal church in a township of Cape Town (my picture, taken in 2020) [31]

In the *inner city*, because of the scarcity of available construction space and the high costs of land and construction, religious congregations typically *rent space* for places of worship. These are usually former warehouses or workshops, which lend themselves well to collective worship thanks to their size. Here, architectural registrations and indications are more prominent as this is what allows people to identify buildings as places of worship. While residents in townships tend to know the locations of religious congregations through word of mouth, inner-city congregations draw people from different areas and therefore need to place *visible signs of their religious orientation* on their buildings in order to market themselves. [32]

Importantly, *Pentecostal place-making strategies involve not only buildings, but also other fundamental services such as running water and electricity*. Running water is important as many Pentecostal groups use their places of worship in multifunctional ways and organize soup kitchens, night vigils, and other gatherings that require water. In religious terms, electricity is even more important as it enables the use of amplifiers and electronic keyboards during religious services and worship sessions. In Pentecostal congregations, the spiritual power of religious music is first and foremost understood as a function of the volume they are able to muster—in other words, sheer decibels. In general, the louder the music, the more strongly participants feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Over the years, Melisizwe<sup>1</sup>—one of my main informants—contacted me several times asking for help because of problems with his electronic equipment. His keyboard broke twice and needed repair. In at least two other instances, his loudspeakers were stolen by burglars. On each of these occasions, Melisizwe felt that the lack of amplified song and music would have negative consequences—both for his religious congregation and for himself as their pastor. [33]

#### 4.4 Heritagization: Place-keeping strategies

The proliferation of new Pentecostal but also Islamic places of worship in townships, informal settlements, and suburbs contrasts starkly with those belonging to mainstream Christian churches, especially Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, and Dutch Reformed. Places of worship from these traditions are among the most emblematic buildings in Cape Town's city center and are widely seen as constituting a major part of the city's architectural heritage.



Figure 3: St. Mary's Cathedral in the center of Cape Town (my picture, taken in 2014) [34]

While lacking congregational dynamism, they continue to play central roles through processes of *heritagization* and *musealization*, whereby their social relevance is less constructed around regular religious practice (e.g., Sunday services), and more around the idea that they are sacred symbols of the city and its urban populations in general. This conceptualization of heritagization is akin to Susan ASHLEY and Sybille FRANK's (2016, p.501) notion of heritage-making "as a process of cultural production in relation to the past by which people make sense of their world and their place within it, as well as strategically assert their voices in the public sphere." [35]

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1 All names of informants have been anonymized in order to protect their identities.



Such symbolizations of places of worship occur, among other things, when religiously inspired civil society activities, such as demonstrations, silent marches, collective mourning, and funeral marches, or any other type of interfaith activities take place at centrally located landmark churches. In my fieldwork, I participated in a host of such activities, including demonstrations for interreligious peace in response to the publication of the Mohammed cartoon in the Danish Newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005, in the wake of (minor) tensions between South African Jews and Muslims in response to military conflicts between Israel and Palestine in Gaza in 2006 and 2008, and during protest demonstrations against the misogynist rhetoric of former president Jacob ZUMA. Many demonstrations of this kind start or end at the Anglican St. George's Cathedral on Wale Street, whose cultural value as a material symbol of struggles for social justice (which harkens back to the fight against the apartheid system of racial oppression) has thereby been revitalized. For many township residents who do not commute to the city center for work, collective political or religious activities around landmark churches are in fact among the rare occasions that bring them to the city. [36]

Significantly, these choices of location are not accidental, but have to do with the fact that in Cape Town and the Western Cape province as a whole, mission churches such as the Anglicans and Methodists play major roles in interfaith initiatives and activities, often adopting religious roles that transcend their confessional, parochial identities. Offering their places of worship for interfaith activities are a part of place-keeping strategies by which these religious actors, in spite of their dwindling congregations, seek to preserve or even enhance their spatial presence and the cultural value and symbolism of their church buildings within the spatial imaginations of city residents.



Figure 4: Central Methodist Mission in the center of Cape Town (my picture, taken in 2014) [37]

## 5. Creating Religious Space in Barcelona

### 5.1 The Catalan and Spanish national context: Catholic dominance and transnational migration

Whereas South Africa is a settler society in which many enduring institutional features emerged from European colonialism, Spain was long a colonizing society whose dominant religious tradition—Roman Catholicism—was one of its chief exports. Throughout much of the country's history, Roman Catholicism has dominated Spanish institutions, politics, and culture, both in its officially legitimated form as clerical Catholicism and in its vernacular form, usually referred to as *catolicismo popular* (popular Catholicism). Spanish notions of nationhood and Catholic identity have been very closely linked throughout history. These were loosened slowly through the process of democratization that ensued after the death of Franco and the end of his fascist dictatorship, as a new constitution and legal framework began to ensure religious freedom and pluralism. [38]

Whereas levels of religious belief and participation in collective worship such as Sunday Mass are currently higher than in most other parts of Europe (and also higher than in Quebec but lower than in South Africa), tendencies toward secularization set in with the rise of industrial urban societies in metropolitan centers such as Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao in the late nineteenth century, along with the emergence of proletarian political countercultures such as socialism, communism, anarchism, and anarcho-syndicalism. However, even as the institutional privileges that the Catholic Church once enjoyed in the Spanish state have weakened through democratization, there have been concerted and successful efforts to legally guarantee Catholicism's exceptional status in Spain's institutional landscape. In short, by declaring Catholicism to be an essential part of Spanish *national culture and heritage* and by highlighting its particular role in Spain's history, Catholic privileges have partly survived (ASTOR, BURCHARDT & GRIERA, 2017). [39]

However, while Catholic-inspired Castilian nationalism has been the central unifying force in Spain since the Middle Ages, its political authority has persistently been challenged by counter-state nationalisms, especially in the Basque Country, Galicia, Andalusia, and in Catalonia, of which Barcelona is the capital city. Catalonia has thus developed distinct cultural and religious features, many of which are associated with its nature as an early center of industrialization. In Catalonia, processes of secularization—especially among native populations of Catalans and Spaniards—have accelerated at a more dramatic pace than in the rest of Spain. In Catalonia, the number of practicing Catholics dropped from 33.8 percent in 1980 to 18.7 percent in 2007, while the proportion of those identifying as Catholic fell from 68.8 percent in 1996 to 52.1 percent in 2014 (NEGRE & GARCIA JORBA, 1998, p.849). Catalonia also developed its own regime of religious governance. Geared toward accommodating the large numbers of migrants flowing in from the late 1990s and toward de-monopolizing Catholicism, the Catalan state created a series of laws,



policies, and institutions intended to promote religious diversity and the equal treatment of religious communities. [40]

## 5.2 Urban context (Barcelona)

Barcelona's urban space is profoundly marked by the historical presence of Catholicism, which has been the dominant religious tradition since the beginning of the fourth century. However, similarly to Cape Town, Barcelona is a harbor city that has always attracted newcomers from other countries across the Mediterranean, such as Jews, who played an important role until their expulsion under the reign of the infamous Spanish inquisition following the Reconquista in 1492. While Protestant minorities have been present in the city mainly through the missionary activities of American, British, and French Presbyterians and Methodists, their visibility has been strongly circumscribed (ESTRUCH, GOMEZ, GRIERA & IGLESIAS, 2007, p.100). The nature of Barcelona and Cape Town as harbor cities has continued, even after the harbors lost their economic and infrastructural centrality for urban development and the city's spatial regime (BERKING & SCHWENK, 2011). [41]

At the same time, Barcelona was characterized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the rise of powerful labor and anarchist movements and a well-organized freemasonry. All of these movements were largely critical of Catholic cultural dominance and political influence and even outright anti-clerical, thereby contributing to the spread of secularist political orientations and forms of secular habitus among Barcelona's residents. [42]

However, the population's religious-secular configuration as well as the resulting cultural politics of space have changed dramatically with the rise of transnational migration since at least the late 1990s. While in 1996 the share of non-nationals among Catalonia's inhabitants stood at 1.6 percent, this figure rose to 2.9 percent by 2000 and then increased spectacularly to 16 percent by 2010, bringing Catalonia to above-average European migration levels in a period of less than fifteen years (BRUGUÉ & GONZÁLEZ, 2013; RODON & FRANCO-GUILLEN, 2014). Whereas earlier migrants were mainly Spaniards from other regions of Spain, the majority of migrants arriving since the beginning of the twenty-first century have come from Romania, Bulgaria, Pakistan, India, Morocco, and Nigeria, as well as from all over Latin America. As BORKERT, PÉREZ, SCOTT and DE TONA (2006) emphasized, this complexity in recent migration also produced new challenges for qualitative migration research. [43]

Since many of these migrants are not Christians, religious differences have become much more visible over the last 25 years. These differences are central to rapidly evolving negotiations over urban citizenship and cultural diversity. In Barcelona, more than half of all Protestant churches were founded in the last 25 years (1992–2017), almost doubling their presence since 1997, while over 60 percent of Catalan mosque communities emerged between 2000 and 2014 (MARTÍNEZ-ARIÑO, 2018). Even within Christianity, cultural and religious differences have become more pronounced, as Christian immigrants belong to a

hugely diverse field, ranging from Coptic Christianity and Filipino Catholicism to Romanian Orthodoxy and African Pentecostalism. All of these groups have their own spatial strategies, styles of worship, notions of belonging, and ideologies of presence in urban space, and they all differ from the established and inherited versions of Catholicism that have shaped the cultural landscapes of the city over long periods of history. In stark contrast to Cape Town, *views toward religion mostly range between indifference and skepticism and strongly diverge in terms of the subjective importance of natives and transnational migrants*. The *deepening of religious diversity and secularization* are thus the main processes of religious change. [44]

### 5.3 Challenging spatial regimes

In general, the Catalan government has responded to the greater presence of migrants and other new religious communities with a range of policies, initiatives, and discourses that have sought to foster religious newcomers' institutional incorporation as well as their public recognition (GRIERA, 2016). Since the 2000s, emerging and publicly circulating notions of secularity have largely centered on the idea of "secularity as respect for religious diversity" (BURCHARDT, 2017, p.602). While Catholic hierarchies were initially reluctant to employ the language of secularity, seeing it as anti-Catholic, it has in fact become normalized over the last two decades. In line with Barcelona's self-image as a cosmopolitan city, the city government and urban officials were in many ways pioneers in developing policy frameworks around religious diversity. [45]

Religious diversity was recognized as important for urban life as early as 1992, when urban authorities promoted interfaith activities in the context of the Olympic Games (GRIERA, 2012). In keeping with these efforts, the city founded the Office of Religious Affairs in 2005 with the task to promote, manage, and organize religious diversity in the city and to develop cordial relationships with all religious communities. In practice, employees of the agency have become something akin to public brokers who mediate between urban authorities (for example, the police, units of urban government, or district administrations) and religious communities in numerous ways, in particular with regard to issues concerning places of worship and uses of public urban space for religious processions and festivals. However, while city officials have often been adamant in presenting the Office as an example of their progressive policies and a showcase for their successful efforts in managing urban diversity, employees of the Office complained in my interviews about a lack of commitment from the city government. With the Office located in an unassuming suburb far from the city center, one employee sarcastically asked me: "Look where we are here! Is this where you put an office that is doing important work for the city?" (my translation from Spanish). [46]

Despite this criticism, it is interesting that *Barcelona's spatial regime* has been increasingly shaped by urban officials' *orientation toward the framework of secularity as respect for religious diversity*, with the *management of religious diversity* as a central piece of governmental efforts to secure social cohesion in urban life. While the secular outlook of post-Catholic majority populations might

lead one to expect that they would be hesitant to embrace religious diversity, governmental efforts have helped to lower possible tensions. Significantly, through the establishment of a dense web of personal relationships with migrant religious communities—in particular with Muslims (both Sunni and Shiite), Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Christians—the orientation toward this framework has been shared by these communities, with employees actually encouraging them to make themselves visible in public space, albeit in an organized and well-prepared manner, and to actively participate in Barcelona's public life. [47]

#### 5.4 Spatial strategies: Center and periphery

With regard to places of worship as efforts to produce durable presences in urban space, *migrant religious communities' spatial strategies* have been complicated by a range of economic factors. Free land for new buildings is extremely scarce in central parts of the *inner city*, which makes it very difficult to erect purpose-built places of worship. In addition, as a result of the neoliberal turn in Barcelona's urbanism during the 1990s, prices for real estate have skyrocketed (MONTANER, ÁLVAREZ & MUXI, 2012).



Figure 5: Storefront church in Barcelona, my picture taken in 2013 [48]

This has left most communities with no choice but to *rent spaces on the ground floor of buildings*, where they often have to wrestle with tight regulations in terms of hygiene, maximum number of users, noise complaints, and logistics. Because of the extremely high population density in central districts such as Raval, Borne, and Poble Sec, building codes and regulations are very strict. Moreover, because of the human congestion and crowding engendered by Friday prayers or other collective religious rituals, neighborhood and resident associations have not always been in favor of the establishment of new mosques (ASTOR, 2016). [49]

This situation has consequences not only for the place-making strategies of Muslims and Pentecostal Christians, but also for the spatial distribution of religious belonging across the city as well as religious imaginations of urban space. *Communities that gather relatively large numbers of followers* in one

space, such as Muslims, have found it more convenient to rent or purchase *abandoned industrial warehouses in the commercial areas outside the city or in the suburbs*. As several community leaders told me, in choosing this strategy they have avoided both trouble with neighbors and the stigmatization and negative labeling that often occurs in anti-mosque campaigns (ibid.); they have also acquired more space for less money and circumvented parking-related logistical issues. Some industrial zones are also well-connected by public transport, allowing for new forms of religious commuting. With their spatial strategies and geographic choices, shaped by the factors described above, some Muslim communities have actually contributed to migrant communities' *peripheralization*. In their eyes, the benefits have clearly outweighed the costs. While human-rights groups have criticized the urban government for pushing Muslims to the outskirts and making their presence invisible, some minority groups appreciate the conditions in Barcelona's periphery as they suit their needs. [50]

By contrast, Barcelona's *Pentecostals*—largely of Latin American, African, and Gitano origin—tend to organize in comparatively smaller congregations. Importantly, the reason for this is the same as for Cape Town's Pentecostals, namely the principle of establishing religious authority through divine callings and spiritual gifts, which often leads to schisms in existing congregations and the more or less constant opening up of new ministries under the leadership of individual pastors. The smaller size of these churches means that they have found it easier to rent premises as places of worship in central areas. However, having acquired *central locations* also means that they have often had to wrestle with noise complaints. Virtually all district councilors in charge of civic relations told me in interviews that Evangelical and Pentecostal groups have received especially high numbers of noise complaints because of their long hours of singing and the use of amplifiers, loudspeakers, and drums, along with the conducting of night vigils during which they often violate regulations about noise nuisance during night hours. [51]

Such complaints from Barcelona's residents reveal *notions of (the right to) privacy*, which inhere in spatial regimes. This contrasts powerfully with the case of Cape Town, and with other African metropolises for that matter. In Cape Town, complaints about the noise caused by religious performances are extremely rare and even inconceivable for most residents, as in general, people do not register religious sound in the same terms as other types of noise. As mentioned above, religious practices in Cape Town enjoy high cultural legitimacy in the eyes of most residents. As a consequence, if noise is produced through religious practices, it appears to be more easily tolerated, whereas in Barcelona the opposite is true. In other words, if religious practices are the source of noise, their perception as a nuisance is compounded. [52]

The place-making strategies of migrant religious communities not only involve permanent religious markings in urban space, but also ephemeral, impermanent, or periodical kinds of presence. In particular, this occurs through the use of urban space for festivals, which has strongly increased in recent years, reflecting

ongoing processes of the *eventization of urban space* (see, for instance, KNOBLAUCH, 2000). [53]

Urban bureaucrats regularly offer *municipal gyms* for the special worship and devotions of Pentecostal congregations, to which they invite well-known evangelists from abroad. They also block roads for processions, including on the occasion of the Sikh Baisakhi festival, the veneration of "Guru Nanak," and the Shiite Ashura, and they allow Muslims to use gyms or other large halls for the celebration of the end of Ramadan (Eid-Al-Fitr) or to pitch tents for this purpose in public schoolyards. The officers working for Barcelona's Office of Religious Affairs, for instance, maintain an annual calendar that specifies the holidays of all religious communities with whom they collaborate, as preparing the use of public spaces for these events is one of their main responsibilities. [54]

While urban officials are aware that proselytism is constitutionally protected as a religious practice by the right to religious freedom, they are often uneasy about it, as they feel that very *overt proselytizing practices may have disruptive effects on urban conviviality and public order*. In fact, concerns over proselytism epitomize the difficulties urban administrations encounter in balancing rights to freedom of religion and rights to public order, thus heightening legal ambiguities. The director of Barcelona's Office of Religious Affairs, for instance, told me in a conversation that in her view, there were no clear rules on how to deal with proselytism. According to her, all major Pentecostal events in Barcelona were deeply proselytizing in nature, while public street performances such as Sikh processions were more about ceremonial assertions of Sikhs' urban citizenship. On one occasion, district officials rejected the Jehovah's Witnesses' request to use the civic center in Barcelona's La Barceloneta district for a theater play because the play was based on a theme from the Bible and was therefore deemed proselytizing. Ironically, whereas the orientation and openness of religious events toward the general public is a criterion that would usually qualify them for state support, in the case of proselytism this orientation becomes highly problematic and seems to turn state support into a kind of religious favoritism with which urban officials feel uncomfortable because of its presumably shaky legal foundations. For a certain period, the Jehovah's Witnesses of Barcelona even refused to request permission for their proselytizing campaigns. [55]

## **6. Creating Religious Spaces in Montreal**

### **6.1 National context (Quebec and Canada): Secularization, migration and *laïcité***

Similarly to Cape Town and Barcelona, Montreal's religious field has been radically transformed over the last twenty to thirty years, mainly through *transnational migration* and processes of *secularization* among native Quebecers. As in Cape Town, Montreal's *ethnic divisions are strongly spatialized*, with English-speaking Quebecers (mostly of British, Irish, and Scottish origin) residing west of Boulevard St. Laurent and Francophones concentrated in the neighborhoods east of it.



Figure 6: Abandoned church building in Montreal (my picture, taken in 2015) [56]

Much like Barcelona but in contrast to other Canadian provinces, society in Quebec has historically been deeply shaped by Roman Catholicism. However, since its period of rapid modernization and what is called the *révolution tranquille* (quiet revolution) that began at the end of the 1950s, there has been a stronger emphasis on a secular public sphere than elsewhere in Canada. [57]

While most immigration to Montreal in the period following the Second World War hailed from Portugal, Greece, Italy, and Eastern Europe, today many immigrants are North Africans, Haitians, South Asians, and Southeast Asians (ROUSSEAU, 2010). So-called "visible minorities" accounted for 12.2 percent of Montreal's population in 1996, rising to 13.5 percent in 2001 and 16.6 percent in 2006 (GERMAIN & DEJEAN, 2013, p.37). The Canadian government defines visible minorities as non-aboriginal persons who are not Caucasian, or who are non-white in color. [58]

During the same period, the inherited religiosities of former Catholic and Anglo-Protestant populations have declined dramatically, giving rise to secular world views and new spiritualities (MEINTEL & MOSSIÈRE, 2013). In Quebec, the number of believers who participate in Catholic Mass at least once a month fell from 51 percent in 1975 to 24 percent in 2005. In less than fifty years, Quebec has transformed from a priest-ridden province, as a well-known saying once had it, into a hotbed of secularization and a society with an expressly secular self-understanding. Intriguingly, however, the number of those who consider themselves Catholic only fell 0.4 percent, from 83.9 percent in 1971 to 83.5 percent in 2001 (MEUNIER, LANIEL & DEMERS, 2010, p.89). [59]

These processes of religious change have been accompanied by entrenched *political controversies about how to manage religious diversity*, often linked to concerns over the presence of religious symbols or clothes, or the conducting of religious practices at particular sites. In the wake of these conflicts, there have been persistent attempts to institutionalize more far-reaching definitions of the

secularity of public spaces and spheres through laws and administrative rules. Contrary to Catalonia, the dominant *public framework holds that the secularity of public space implies or demands the imposition of certain limitations on (particularistic) religious markers within it.* [60]

## 6.2 Urban context (Montreal)

While this framework is not entirely out of sync with the cultural sensibilities of Montreal's population, it does clash with the tremendous ethnic and religious diversity that characterizes this city to a much greater extent than the surrounding province of Quebec. For a long time, this diversity was described as a juxtaposition of two separate ethno-linguistic groups—the Anglophones and the Francophones. The popular image of Montreal's urban space was "a city whose social fabric was above all shaped by a spatial divide, roughly corresponding to St. Lawrence Boulevard, between two distinct communities, each internally cohesive and ignorant of the other" (GERMAIN & ROSE, 2000, p.214). [61]

At the same time, there have always been divisions of urban space along the lines of social equality and class, which do not always coincide with ethnic divisions. Thus, by the 1940s, Park Avenue—just a few blocks west of St. Lawrence Boulevard—became the border between wealthy and less privileged populations (ibid.). [62]

This public image, however, bolstered by generalizing census categories (such as "British" as an ethnic category), ignores the presence of many other ethnic minorities that have mostly settled in the space between the two dominant groups, in what has become the immigrant corridor. Significantly, as GERMAIN and ROSE argued,

"the spatial patterning has [...] never been static, and with the decline of Montreal's anglophone population and the diversification of immigration, forces are at work which, on the whole, point in the direction of increased ethnocultural heterogeneity throughout most of the island of Montreal and in some of the off-island suburbs" (p.215). [63]

Especially since the 1970s, immigration has become increasingly more dominated by ethnic groups of non-European origin. Slowly, this immigration has also contributed to the transformation of publicly circulating city images, from a focus on Montreal's struggle to be a metropolis to the notion of a multicultural city. The more Quebec as a whole has become secularized, the more cultural differences between it and Montreal have become entrenched. While Quebec has turned into a secularized province with a Catholic heritage and tradition, Montreal—because of its much higher levels of immigration—has retained its religious vibrancy and turned into a city of religious innovation. [64]

The ways in which religious diversity is spatially expressed and governed differ as well between the province and Montreal. In general, in the province of Quebec, zoning involves a public consultation mechanism, and citizens may also demand

referendums on particular zoning bylaws. Among other things, citizens may use these opportunities to block the construction of places of worship. The city of Montreal, by contrast, is subject to a special law that precludes the possibility of holding referendums, thereby limiting citizens' involvement in planning decisions (FOUROT, 2010). In addition, urban administrations in Montreal distinguish between "community centers" and "places of worship," each of which is linked to specific permits for "social activities" or "religious activities," respectively (DEJEAN, 2016, p.140). [65]

### 6.3 Spatial strategies: Judicialization, urban outreach and heritagization

So how are processes of religious change and the re-figuration of urban spaces mediated and linked to such publicly circulating notions of secularity in Montreal? In general, as in the other two cases, there has been an *increase in places of worship belonging to religious minorities*, which native Quebecers have often perceived as challenging inherited definitions of urban space as secular *and* (post-)Catholic, and which has often provoked politicized controversies in terms of spatial competition. However, to a much greater extent than in Barcelona, controversies surrounding these places of worship have become *judicialized*. In other words, religious minorities have often protested against limitations or prohibitions to erect places of worship imposed on them by urban administrations, typically in response to residents' concerns, in courts of law. In most cases, courts have ruled in their favor. Two examples of the case in point are those of Muslims and Jews. [66]

There has been a particularly strong increase in the number of *Muslims* living in Quebec and in Montreal in particular, their total number having risen by 142 percent between 1991 and 2001 (FOUROT, 2010, p.136). This increase is an outcome of Quebec's legally sanctioned preference for French-speaking, highly skilled immigrants from the Muslim-majority societies of North and West Africa. As a result of this migratory influx, at least since the 1990s, requests for the establishment of new places of worship by religious minorities have greatly increased. Thus, although Montreal had only nine mosques in the early 1990s, the number of Islamic prayer places in the metropolitan area (Montreal Island) expanded from 45 in 2002 to over 60 by the end of that decade (p.137). During the same period, there was also a marked increase in the number of synagogues belonging to Jewish Hassidic congregations in the municipality of Outremont and some parts of Montreal, accompanied by rising public concerns about ethno-religious segregation and ghettoization (GAGNON, DANSEREAU & GERMAIN, 2004). [67]

In numerous cases, zoning bylaws and land-use plans have served to justify limitations on the construction of mosques and synagogues and have been used by district governments or administrations to thwart minorities' spatial strategies, preserving the existing spatial regime and the religious-secular geographies it entails (BURCHARDT, 2019). Yet, to a much greater extent than in Barcelona and Cape Town, minorities' spatial strategies have become *judicialized*, seeking to deploy legal means to achieve spatial ends. The reason is that legal



protections of religious minorities are especially strong in the Canadian context and have animated the rise of legal claims. [68]

At the same time, ongoing processes of secularization have prompted Christian activists to create new ideas and visions about their spatial presence and new spatial strategies. Thus, Catholic groups, for instance, began to take to the streets with campaigns against abortion.



Figure 7: Public Catholic anti-abortion campaign in Montreal (my picture, taken in 2014) [69]

Furthermore, evangelical and missionary outreach organizations such as "Youth with a Mission" have begun to understand themselves as distinctly urban and to engage proactively with urban spaces and issues related to urban development. One evangelical activist described this urban orientation in an interview with me, which is worth citing at length:

"So we do a lot of training, how do you understand your neighborhood, how do you study it, how do you understand through appreciative inquiry what are the aspirations, what are the dreams, what are the hopes of people that live in the neighborhood, what are the obstacles to realize them [...]. Churches are increasingly beginning to take sustainable community development seriously and so if somebody asks what type of organization are you, we really are into community transformation, community development. Three of my staff workers are community development organizers, we loan them to the community. They are there to serve the community and do the whole community development process, so we do a lot of that" (English original). [70]

*Churches thus increasingly understand the cultural environment in which they operate in spatial and urbanist terms.* They conceptualize the city through the maps they produce to guide their work. But they also engage with urban space as a realm of distinct sets of social problems and challenges. Thus, he further explained:

"We also really have a bias for kids and one of the huge needs, which you'll discover in the city is a school dropout, a huge problem with kids, who start high school, finishing it. And so we have three centers in three different neighborhoods in Montreal helping kids to succeed at school, but you can never take that question and divorce it from the local situation, from the family or what's going on in the community. In one of the neighborhoods where we work on the east side there is a huge dilemma with intergenerational poverty. So how do you address the issues as intergenerational poverty, kids staying at school, relate that to family issues. Downtown, where we have one of our centers, it's a transient population, so how do you build momentum there? The other neighborhood we work in is the densely populated, most multi-ethnic part of Montreal with a large Muslim population from North Africa. So in the religious diversity, so we are constantly trying to think about you know how do you help kids in their families, how do you deal with issues of the neighborhood and not just in the neighborhood, but of the neighborhood and then how do you build towards social and spiritual transformation?" (English original) [71]

While engagement with social problems among Catholics or Anglicans is in itself nothing new, what is new is how it entails an increasing multiplication of sites where religious practices take place—a movement that takes religion both beyond (permanent) places of worship and beyond established (impermanent) presences in urban space (for example Christian processions). In an effort to reach out, evangelicals increasingly organize spiritual meetings in coffee shops, libraries, gyms, and other places in which engagements are experienced as fluid, flexible, and eventful. [72]

These religious practices contrast strongly with the decay of many of the cities' churches. Some church communities have been able to benefit from a program launched by the provincial government to preserve their religious heritage. In order to apply for funding, congregations need to demonstrate the unique historical and artistic value of their church building.



Figure 8: "Our religious patrimony is sacred!" Banner announcing public subsidies received for the preservation of a Catholic church building in Montreal (my picture, taken in 2014) [73]

However, the majority of Montreal's churches were built during successive waves of church construction reaching well into the 1960s, and many of them are actually very similar in style. This means that heritage funding is the exception rather than the norm. Many churches have been repurposed and transformed into condominiums or other kinds of real-estate projects. In Montreal, secularization and heritagization are thus two sides of the same coin, with place-keeping strategies only partially successful. [74]

## 7. What Do We Learn From a Cross-Cultural Comparison of Cities?

Across the three cities analyzed in this article, religious communities and urban officials and policy-makers share a wide range of ideas and conceptions on what the spatial politics concerning religion imply. Interestingly, this is despite far-reaching differences with regard to the social significance of religion. These *ideas and conceptions shape the spatial strategies* of religious actors just as they shape the administrative practices of the urban officials who interpret and act on cities' spatial regimes. Significantly, these ideas and conceptions reflect and rework the dominant frameworks in which the place of religion is conceptualized in society. [75]

As I have tried to show by building on the work of KNIBBE (2009), in this context actors develop and engage with maps that involve ideas about desired or expected future re-figurations of spaces—about religious presences to be established, ghettoizations to be avoided, and so on. *Maps* should thus, as KNIBBE rightly emphasized, not only be seen as representations of space, but

also as inhering in spatial strategies. Moreover, religious maps are clearly contested, but these contestations are structured by the ways in which religious actors, urban governments, administrations, planners, and courts all draw on and engage with public frameworks regarding religious diversity and secularity. [76]

I argue that these *mutual constitutions of processes of religious change on the one hand and the re-figuration of spaces on the other are characterized by three distinct processes*:

1. By *infrastructuration*, I mean the ways in which material and social technologies (including architecture, administrative standards, building codes and regulations, and logistical norms) enable particular, more or less *durable* spatializations of urban religion.
2. *Eventization*, by contrast, refers to how spaces of urban religion emerge out of the use of public space for ephemeral, evanescent enactments of religious identities and boundaries.
3. Finally, *heritagization* means the process through which places of worship or inherited public religious rituals are refashioned as central to cities and urban populations' collective identities, and urban space is marked as such. [77]

These processes are outcomes of the spatial strategies in which religious communities engage and of existing spatial regimes—that is, the dominant ways in which urban spaces are cognitively framed, governed by urban authorities, and used by citizens. In general, *place-making strategies* are salient in moments of accelerating *immigration*, which often brings new religious actors into urban scenes. Place-making strategies are both enabled and constrained by what I call *infrastructuration*. This is clear in the ways in which regulations on places of worship have affected Muslims and Jews in Montreal, in how poor Christians in Cape Town's townships need to secure access to water and electricity in order to begin their ministries, and in how migrant groups in Barcelona navigate both the complex terrain of religious governance and the cultural sensibilities (or even hostilities) of established resident groups. [78]

*Place-seeking strategies*, defined as those aimed at ephemeral presences in urban space, are visible in the efforts to re-evangelize Montreal's youth described above, or the spiritual flash mobs and public meditations organized occasionally by Barcelona's Buddhists. Such strategies surely contribute to the *eventization* of urban religion and are fostered by broader trends toward the eventization of urban space. As for place-making strategies, questions surrounding the power to define where such practices can take place are central for the impact of these strategies. The more public and prestigious the site at which religious devotions take place, the more the visibility of the organizers is enhanced. As the complex negotiations over the organization of the Shiite procession in Barcelona demonstrate (ASTOR, BLANCO & MARTÍNEZ CUADROS, 2018), however, visibility does not automatically imply general assent or acceptance by the broader population. Interestingly, place-seeking strategies feed into spatial regimes in ways that are not always clear. Elusive, impermanent, and easy to

change as they are, place-seeking strategies *can have multiple effects* and are found in the interstices of different urban regimes. In Barcelona, religious events are sometimes registered as cultural events, as religious ceremonies, or as political demonstrations, depending on the kind of permission religious groups seek to obtain (BURCHARDT, 2020). And because they take place on ground that is, by definition and often practically, shared with others (that is, non-adherents), they have the power to produce face-to-face and physical encounters with others and to transform understandings of urban space through sensorial arrangements and aesthetics. [79]

Finally, *place-keeping strategies* are most immediately related—but not limited—to processes of *heritagization*. Place-keeping strategies can involve the sheer construction of new places of worship, which may aim to signal cultural power and hegemony, as suggested by the construction of new churches in Moscow, mosques in Istanbul, and Hindu temples in Delhi. However, more typical of place-keeping strategies in the cities studied in this article are the ways in which existing religious sites are discursively reframed as heritage, promoted as symbols of the cities, and imbued with a sort of cultural significance, transcending the religious groups to which they belong. [80]

Significantly, while I began with a relatively clearly defined set of concepts (spatial strategies, infrastructuration, eventization, heritagization) and explored whether and how these were relevant for understanding the re-figuration of spaces in Cape Town, Barcelona, and Montreal, these *concepts are in need of constant redefinition if they are to be meaningful in cross-cultural comparison*. Different urban histories produce urban spaces that are both specific and comparable. If concepts such as those outlined here are to operate as meaningful criteria for cross-cultural comparisons, they need to resonate with both the structures produced by urban histories as well as with the sensibilities of urban residents. [81]

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